

Public Works Committee of the Town of Amherst
Minutes of the regular meeting of March 2007
Tuesday, March 13, 2007 at the Public Works Department Meeting Room

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:20 upon the arrival of Messrs. Moran and O'Connor. Present were: Rob Crowner, Chair; Michael Cann; Donald George; Charles Moran; Vincent O'Connor; Alan Snow of 17 Logtown Road, Chair of the town's Public Shade Tree Committee; and staff liaison Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works.

Additions to the Agenda: At the request of the Chair, the Committee agreed to add the following items to the agenda: a) Pelham Road; b) Special Municipal Employee status for the Committee; c) a presentation by the new chair of the Public Shade Tree Committee; d) recommendation(s) related to parking for the North Amherst Community Farm farmstand on North Pleasant Street.

Status of Sidewalk Plan: The Superintendent of Public Works, Mr. Mooring, reported that the Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) had no specific questions or comments about his request for sidewalk money. In response to a question, Mr. Mooring said that he had made a single request of \$50,000 for sidewalk extensions and repair, rather than separate requests for approximately \$70,000 recommended by the Committee.

Spring Street Sidewalk: In answer to a question, Mr. Mooring said that work on sidewalk replacement for the second block of Spring Street, between Boltwood Avenue and Churchill, might end up on a fast track, now that the Episcopal Church construction is underway. He also said that Amherst College evidently has plans that might require undergrounding the utilities on that block and might preempt other sidewalk work.

Shade Tree Presentation: The Committee heard an informative presentation by Mr. Alan Snow, new Chair of the town's Public Shade Tree Committee, on the value of shade trees, and on new initiatives to restore shade trees to areas of town that have lost their shade trees, including methods to fund and site replacement shade trees. On a motion by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Crowner, and adopted without objection, the Committee voted to request and recommend that the town's Department of Public Works in the future submit 25% plans of all public projects to the town's Public Shade Tree Committee for review and comment.

Mr. Snow also explained that the town was in the process of securing a grant to inventory the town's public shade trees and place information on their size, location, and species in a layer of the town's GIS system. He also said there would be a Shade Tree Committee warrant article for the Annual Town Meeting providing for a method to insure replacement of public shade trees removed due to private construction projects. Committee members and others who have suggestions regarding shade tree replacement and other shade tree issues were invited to contact Mr. Snow at <alansnow@state.ma.us>

Amity Street Sidewalk: Mr. Mooring presented the plans for redoing the first block of Amity Street, including sidewalks. He explained that the Town Manager requested that work on this block be taken up prior to work being resumed on the North Pleasant Street sidewalks, in part because certain lights at the northwest corner of Amity and Pleasant Streets won't be able to function without expensive, duplicative work until this Amity Street block is done.

After reviewing the plans for this block on Amity Street presented by Mr. Mooring, members of the Committee had the following comments:

Mr. George: We pay design pros to do this work. We should not monkey.

Mr. Moran: The plan provides more pedestrian access to town. Despite my dislike of the additional concrete, I support it.

Mr. Cann: Can't visualize the degree to which travel lanes would be narrowed. It is not very New England.

Mr. Crowner: Don't agree with the location of the eastbound bus stop - at southwest corner of Amity and Prospect Streets - the size of the bump outs at North Prospect, and the additional three feet of concrete on both sides of the street.

Mr. O'Connor: Opposed to the added three feet of concrete on both sides of the street. A better use of the space would be for bicycle lanes. Also object to making the street one lane on both sides west of the east exit from the town's Amity Street parking lot. Cars that stop to drop off folks at the Jones Library would tie up traffic or block the bicycles lanes.

On a motion by Mr. Moran, seconded by Mr. George, the Committee voted 4 to 1 (Mr. O'Connor opposed) in favor of the Amity Street plans as submitted in concept.

On a motion by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Crowner, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that work on this block of Amity Street be delayed until after completion of the North Pleasant sidewalk work from Kellogg Avenue to Pray Street for the following reasons: a) the North Pleasant Street sidewalks are in much worse condition, b) Amity Street itself is in good condition, c) the portion of North Pleasant Street from Triangle Street to Kellogg Avenue is in very poor condition and will not be paved until adjacent sidewalk work is completed, and d) work on North Pleasant Street will have a greater impact on improving the downtown.

Pelham Road: Mr. Mooring said that work on Pelham Road east of the Fort River Bridge, including sidewalk work, is complicated by the narrow right-of-way. The Public Works Department will not be able to produce design plans until the end of this year, and for this reason, reconstruction work cannot proceed until next year.

Atkins Corner Intersection Project: The times for various hearings on this project were announced and members were encouraged to attend.

University Drive: Plans and hearings for this project are due soon.

Special Municipal Employee Status: Information on the differences for Committee members of having or not having SME status will be provided to Committee members

for their consideration. SME status will be granted to committees only upon their request and for good cause.

The Committee adjourned at 9:??pm.

By V. O'Connor